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Message Text

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43
ACTION SCA-01

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9847

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CGEN
SUBJECT: PRISON VISITS/SSA SERVICES

REF: STATE 60818, LONDON A-125

1. THE EMBASSY IS AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PRISON VISITS AND WILL ESTABLISH A PROPER SCHEDULE FOR VISITING ALL PRISONERS IN OUR CONSULAR DISTRICT JUST AS SOON AS THE MANDEL AND THE NEW CONSULAR POSITIONS ARE FILLED. WE ARE ALREADY VISITING PRISONERS WHEN PRISON WELFARE OFFICERS ADVISE US THAT PRISON WELFARE FACILITIES ARE INADEQUATE TO DEAL WITH INDIVIDUAL PRISORER NEEDS AND UPON DIRECT REQUESTS FROM PRISONERS IF WE CANNOT SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS BY TELEPHONE OR LETTER.

2. LONDON HAS BEEN FOLLOWING THE ABOVE VISITATION CRITERIA FOR A GREAT MANY YEARS WITHOUT REPERCUSSION. BRITISH PRISON AND JURIDICAL SYSTEMS HAVE LONG BEEN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED AS BEING HUMANE AND ENTIRELY IN KEEPING WITH THE AMERICAN ETHIC. WE SHOULD NOT COMMIT THE EMBASSY TO A VISITATION PROGRAM BEFORE WE ARE STAFFED ADEQUATELY TO DO THE JOB ON A REGULAR BASIS. IF WE SHOULD DO SO THE NONIMMIGRANT SYSTEM WE HAVE STRUGGLED SO DILLIGENTLY TO IMPROVE WOULD SUFFER BECAUSE IT WOULD MEAN DIVERTING CONSULAR OFFICERS FROM VISA WORK TO VISITING PRISONERS AND A RESUMPTION OF THE LONG VISA
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WAITING LINES OUTSIDE OF THE EMBASSY THAT ARE CERTAINLY

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NOT IN KEEPING WITH OUR BICENTENNIAL IMAGE AND DEPARTMENT REQUIREMENTS.

3. IT IS TRUE THAT OUR VISITOR VISA VOLUME SLIPPED SIX PERCENT IN THE PERIOD JULY/DECEMBER 1975. HOWEVER, THE FIGURES THUS FAR FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1976 INDICATE THAT THIS WILL BE A BANNER VISA YEAR EITHER BECAUSE OF A NATURAL ACCRETION INTERRUPTED BY ECONOMIC FACTORS HAPPENING DURING 1975 OR BECAUSE OF BICENTENNIAL STIMULUS OR BECAUSE OF THE AIRLINES ADVANCED BOOKING SCHEME WHICH OFFERS A SIGNIFICANT DISCOUNT FOR PAYING CASH IN ADVANCE FOR A NON-REFUNDABLE BOOKING. IN SHORT, WE DO NOT KNOW EXACTLY WHY 1976 MAY BE OUR BIGGEST NONIMMIGRANT VISA YEAR YET BUT IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT INCREASES WE FEEL WE CANNOT NOW DEPLOY VISA PERSONNEL ELSEWHERE WITHOUT REVERTING TO 1974 VISA LIRES OUTSIDE THE EMBASSY.

4. THE LIVERPOOL CLOSING WILL CERTAINLY ADD TO OUR PRISON VISITATION PROBLEMS NOT SO MUCH IN NUMBERS AS IN THE DISTANCES NECESSARY TO VISIT THE INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED.

5. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A PRISON VISITATION PROGRAM THAT WE WILL ACTIVATE JUST AS SOON AS OUR CONSULAR POSITIONS ARE ALL FILLED AND WE HAVE DETERMINED AVAILABILITY OF SUFFICIENT FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT POSITIONS. WE WILL BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THAT PROGRAM WITH THE SCA ADMINISTRATOR DURING HIS STOPOVER IN LONDON MARCH 26. ARMSTRONG

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